

## **CLAIMS**

What is claimed is:

1           1. A system for alerting customers and sales personnel that merchandise has been  
2 left in a shopping area, the system comprising:

3                   a merchandise detector for detecting merchandise purchased by a customer;

4                   a customer detector for detecting whether the customer has left the  
5 merchandise; and

6                   a notification system responsive to the customer and merchandise detectors for  
7 alerting the customer when the customer has left the purchased merchandise.

1           2. The system of claim 1 which includes a processing system for receiving  
2 information from the customer and merchandise detectors and providing appropriate signals to  
3 the notification system.

1           3. The system of claim 1 wherein the customer detector is a pressure-sensitive  
2 mat.

1           4. The system of claim 1 wherein the customer detector is a video camera.

1           5. The system of claim 1 wherein the notification system comprises a flashing  
2 light which is activated when the customer has forgotten the merchandise.

1           6.       The system of claim 1 wherein the notification system comprises producing an  
2       audible sound when the customer has forgotten the merchandise.

1           7.       The system of claim 1 wherein a notification system comprises a display  
2       message.

1           8.       The system of claim 1 wherein the merchandise detector comprises a weight  
2       sensor beneath the merchandise.

1           9.       The system of claim 1 wherein the merchandise detector comprises an  
2       electromechanical switch located on a checkout counter.

1           10.      A method for alerting customers and sales personnel that merchandise has been  
2       left in a shopping area, the method comprising the steps of:

3                 (a)      detecting a presence of merchandise associated with a customer via a  
4       second detector;

5                 (b)      detecting whether the customer has left the merchandise via a second  
6       detector; and

7                 (c)      alerting the customer, responsive to the first and second detectors, via a  
8       notification mechanism if the customer has left the merchandise.

1           11.      The method of claim 10 wherein the first detector is a pressure-sensitive mat.

1           12.     The method of claim 10 wherein the first detector is a video camera.

1           13.     The method of claim 10 wherein the notification mechanism comprises a  
2           flashing light which is activated when the customer has forgotten the merchandise.

1           14.     The method of claim 10 wherein the notification mechanism comprises  
2           producing an audible sound when the customer has forgotten the merchandise.

1           15.     The method of claim 10 wherein a notification mechanism comprises a display  
2           message.

1           16.     The method of claim 10 wherein the second detector comprises a weight sensor  
2           beneath the merchandise.

1           17.     The method of claim 10 wherein the second detector comprises an  
2           electromechanical switch located on a checkout counter.

1           18.     A system for alerting customers and sales personnel that merchandise has been  
2           left in a shopping area, the system comprising:

3                 a point of sale processing system;

4                 a merchandise detector coupled to the processing system for detecting

5                 merchandise purchased by a customer;

6                 a customer detector coupled to the processing system for detecting whether the

7 customer has left the merchandise;

8 a checkout stand upon which the merchandise is located; and

9 a notification system coupled to the processing system responsive to the

10 customer and merchandise detectors for alerting the customer when the customer has forgotten

11 the purchased merchandise.